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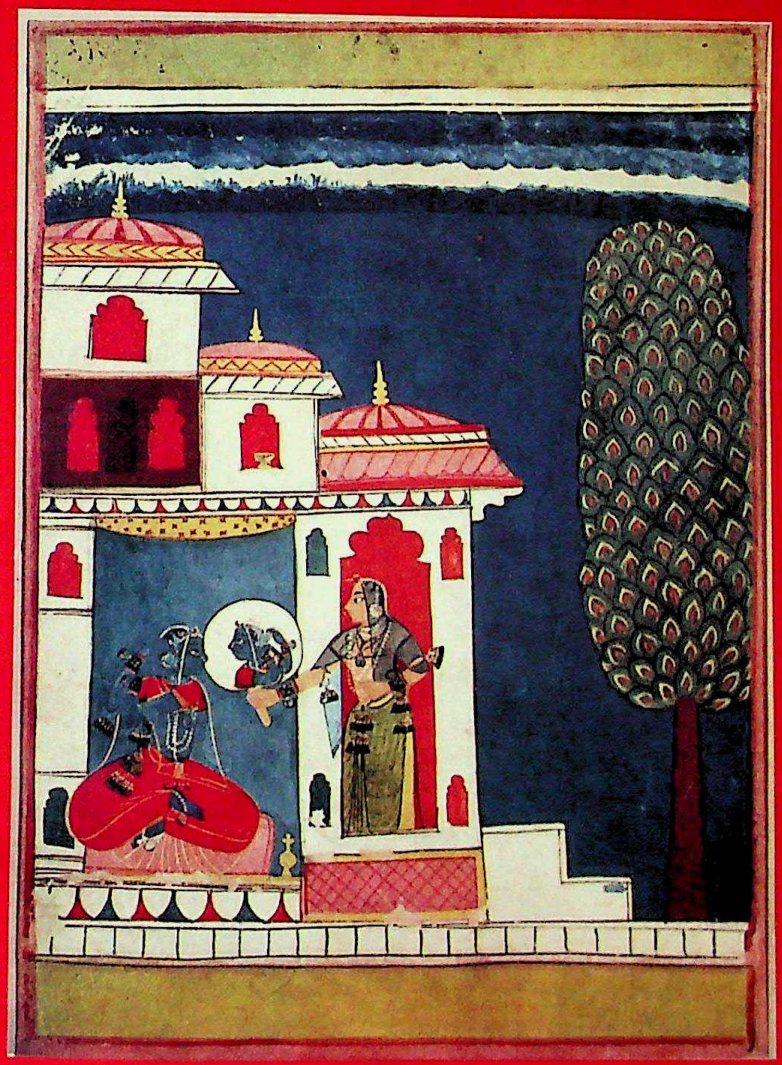

CENTRAL INDIAN PAINTING

with an introduction and notes by

W. G. ARCHER

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CENTRAL INDIAN PAINTING

With an Introduction and Notes
by W. G. Archer

Central Indian painting is a subject which has hitherto received only brief or summary treatment. The recent discovery of two early 16th century manuscripts, however, has revealed the unsuspected existence of an important tradition and has led to a reconsideration of Muslim influences in Indian painting prior to the coming of the Mughals.

In this monograph, Mr. W. G. Archer, Keeper of the Indian Section, Victoria and Albert Museum, discusses the implications of this new material, differentiates the art of Central India from that of Rajasthan and attempts for the first time a detailed reconstruction of Central Indian painting from the 15th to the 19th centuries. He considers the possible rôle as patrons of several historical figures and advances a new interpretation of some of the most sophisticated love-paintings ever produced in India. Ten colour plates illustrate outstanding examples of Central Indian painting none of which have been reproduced in colour before.

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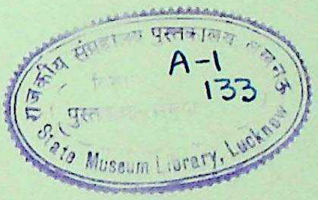

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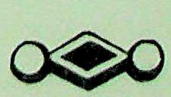

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Introduction by W. G. Archer

The term, 'Central India', is not in common use in Indian art criticism and in order to understand its importance, we must begin with a brief definition. Bounded on the north by the river Chambal, on the east by the Jumna and on the south by the Narbada, central India comprises a tract of country five hundred miles long and three hundred miles wide. Its western and eastern parts were known as Malwa and Bundelkhand—the latter comprising Datia and Orchha, the former Gwalior, Indore, Ujjain, Mandu and Dhar. In the eighth century Malwa was ruled by Rajputs, from the thirteenth to fifteenth by Muslim Turks, and from 1535 till 1561 by Pathans. From then until the eighteenth century, Mughal governors held fitful charge except when Maratha plunderers established rival governments. During these centuries, the prime unit was the town or court yet, due to one important circumstance, the region was destined to play a vital role in Indian painting. Lying in the centre of India, it served from 1500 onwards as a blender and originator of styles. In the west, the Jains of Gujarat had evolved a special kind of book-illustration. To the east lay Oudh and Jaunpur influenced by Muslim culture. To the north stretched Rajasthan, the powerful state of Mewar sedulously preserving Rajput standards, while south of the Narbada lay the Muslim Deccan, its northern-most area comprising Khandesh and Ahmadnagar, its eastern-most Golconda, its southern-most Bijapur. All these regions possessed quite different cultures and it was out of their confluence that the art which we term 'Central Indian Painting' arose.

The earliest central Indian pictures to survive were executed during the fifth or sixth centuries in the Buddhist cave-temples of Bagh at the southern end of Malwa. In style they evince the rounded elegance and delight in physical grace associated with the parallel art of Ajanta. Indeed, just as the central Indian city of Ujjain—the home of the love-poet, Kalidasa—may well have propagated the romantic sensuality which underlies the frescoes of Ajanta, influences from the same court may also explain the paintings at Bagh. Amongst the murals is a festival of song and dance. Courtly figures mounted on horses and elephants pass grandly by while suavely modelled girls dance to a male musician, his skirt displaying the pointed ends so typical of later court attire.[1] Such scenes are not at all Buddhist in spirit and it is possible that they were painted in order to delight the spirit of the cave or shrine and thus ensure the structures' safety.

From the sixth century to the fourteenth, no securely dated pictures have survived. By the twelfth century, in other parts of India, however, the majestic naturalism of Ajanta and Bagh had given way to wiry distortions and while the new style is first apparent on the rock-cut temple of Ellora in the Deccan, it rapidly became the normal means for illustrating Jain scriptures in western India. The Jain religion paralleled Hinduism and was based on the life and teachings of its founder, Mahavira, a contemporary of the Buddha. The leading Jain scripture was termed the *Kalpa sutra* and it was copies of this text which were written and illustrated for Jain patrons first on long strips of palm-leaf and later, after 1400, on paper. The ways of illustrating incidents were quickly standardized and until the fifteenth century, certain conventions were sternly practised. The picture was conceived as a flat design, enclosing airy linear figures. Colours were red and blue, though green and gold were also employed. But the chief mark was a certain type of face. Heads were often shown three-quarter view and the second or further eye as if removed from its socket and projecting into space. Jutting agitated poses contributed to the general ferocity, while the use of flat red backgrounds imbued each incident with taut excitement. Whatever factors may have led the Jains to develop this style, the result was a type of art which like the anguished creations of Picasso and the horrific visors of European armour evoked a mood of turbulent disquiet.

Such a style was a monopoly of Jains and until 1400 its chief centre was Gujarat in western India. The Jains, however, were vigorous traders, covering not only Rajasthan but also eastern India and it is this characteristic which now accounts for developments in central Indian painting. During the fifteenth century, two manuscripts were illustrated—one at Mandu, in central India, in 1439, the other at Jaunpur, just beyond its eastern-most frontier, in 1465. Both were copies of the leading Jain text, the *Kalpa sutra*, but both departed from the standard style. In the Mandu text,[2] characters have a nimble grace, compositions are less crowded and a characteristic idiom, a wriggling skyline, is also included. In the Jaunpur text,[3] heads are squarer, great veils jut from the bodies, outlines are no longer nervously hesitant and there is a new air of smart precision. Such departures may well be due to changes of region. But in Gujarat itself, the study of Persian miniatures was already resulting in greatly enriched borders and it is contacts with Persia and Bukhara which were now to affect central India.

In 1436, Mahmud Khilji, the first of a powerful Muslim

[1] *The Bagh Caves* (London, 1927) pls. D – I.

[2] Ajit Mookerjee, *Art of India* (Calcutta, 1952), figs. 79 and 80.

[3] Moti Chandra, *Jain Miniature Paintings from Western India* (Ahmedabad, 1949), figs. 99–105.

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line, had taken Malwa, later engulfing part of Rajasthan and the Deccan, and while these circumstances might well have depreciated art, there are two respects in which his rule is significant. 'Sooltan Mahmood', Ferishta states 'was polite, brave, just and learned and during his reign, Mahomedans as well as Hindoos were happy and maintained a friendly intercourse with each other.'[1] Already therefore, conditions for the blending of Muslim and Indian styles of painting were emerging. A second factor, however, is more political and concerns Mahmud's relations with outside kingdoms. In 1467, he received an embassy from the Timurid ruler of Bukhara, a Muslim capital in north-east Persia, and in return composed a poem 'in the Indian language' for presentation to its king. This poem, Ferishta states, 'gratified the King of Bokhara more than any of the numerous rarities which the ambassador brought.'[2] Ferishta does not state in what precise language the poem was written but the observation is important since it reveals Mahmud's literary tastes—tastes which are illustrated by the fact that 'his leisure hours were devoted to hearing the histories and memoirs of the court of different kings of the earth read.'[3] It also proves the existence of cultural connections between Malwa and Bukhara in the mid-fifteenth century; and it is these connections which develop even further during the reign of his son and successor, Ghiyas-ud-din (1469–1501).

Ghiyas-ud-din Khilji is famous on two accounts—his delight in pleasure and his 'city of women'. 'Shortly after his accession', Ferishta writes, 'the King gave a grand entertainment on which occasion, addressing his officers, he stated that as he had during the last thirty-four years been employed constantly in the field, fighting constantly under the banners of his illustrious father, he now yielded the sword to his son in order that he might enjoy ease for the rest of his days. He accordingly established within his seraglio all the separate offices of a court and had at one time fifteen thousand women within his palace. Among these were school-mistresses, musicians, dancers, embroiderers, women to read prayers and persons of all professions and trades. Five hundred beautiful young Toorky females in men's clothes and uniformly clad, armed with bows and arrows, stood on his right hand, and were called the Toorky guard. On his left were five hundred Abyssinian females also dressed uniformly, armed with firearms'.[4] Such arrangements may at first sight seem merely domestic and to have no implications for art. We must remember, however, that in stressing 'the importance of living', Ghiyas-ud-din had also abandoned warfare and for a quarter of a century, Malwa maintained its territorial integrity without a single battle. If peace fosters art, Ghiyas-ud-din ensured it. It was his zest for women, however, which had the chief artistic consequences. Following his father Mahmud's tolerance of Hindus, Ghiyas-ud-din not only scoured his own territories for shapely girls but 'obtained them at great trouble and expense from all parts of India',[5] Khurasan and Bukhara. Women do not necessarily mean artists but we can hardly doubt that in this ceaseless scouring of other regions, especially those of Persia and Bukhara, the trading and cultural connections initiated by his father were expanded and the way prepared for Persian infiltration.

In 1501, Ghiyas-ud-din died and it is under his son, Nasir-ud-din (1501–1512), that Persian styles of painting affected Malwa. In 1503, a copy of the Persian poem, the *Bustan* of Sadi,[6] was written at Mandu by Shahsawar, a calligrapher, and illustrated by the artist, Haji Mahmud. Its forty-three paintings are in possible Bukhara manner and although this style had no general effect on Mandu, one idiom—that of a rectangular band filled with floral scrolls (folio 106b)—became a permanent feature in Malwa painting.

It is a second manuscript, however, which is a turning point in Indian art. The book is termed a *nimatnama* or 'book of delicacies' and comprises Ghiyas-ud-din's favourite recipes as well as those of his successor. The book was probably compiled shortly after Ghiyas-ud-din's death and possesses fifty illustrations.[7] The style, with its lush vegetation, formalized leaves and profuse grandeur, is basically the Shirazi style of Persian painting as it had developed under the Turkmans towards the end of the century. At the same time certain very definite Indian elements are present. Although many women appear as men in Persian dress—a concession to Ghiyas-ud-din's whims—others are frankly Indian both in costume and physique. In certain cases Indian trees such as mangoes are introduced and these are rendered with new and lively naturalism. Above all, many poses of the girl attendants reveal an Indian delight in sumptuous form quite opposed to that of the boy-loving Persians. Such adjustments are due to two distinct reasons. The naturalistic trees and certain of the women are based on observation of Mandu and its inhabitants. On the other hand, certain ways of transcribing the female form are influenced by Jain painting, in particular by the idioms employed in the Jaunpur manuscript of 1465. The jutting veils, rounded contours and large eyes all spring from this tradition and while the Persian style is still ascendant, it is clear that Jain painting in the 'Jaunpur' manner was also strongly flourishing. Cross-fertilizations in fact are commencing and these are to continue in the next reign.

[1] Ferishta, *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India* (trans. J. Briggs, London, 1829) IV, 234.

[2] *Ibid.*, 232.

[3] *Ibid.*, 234.

[4] *Ibid.*, 236.

[5] *Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge, 1928), III, 362.

[6] National Museum, New Delhi.

[7] Plates 1 and 2. See also W. G. Archer, *Indian Painting* (London, 1956) 8–9, Pl. 1.

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Following the death of Nasir-ud-din, Malwa passed to Mahmud II (1512–31). This ruler had shown a marked liking for Hindus and aided by his Hindu minister, Medni Rai, had begun to liquidate the Muslim nobility. 'On the king's return to his capital he was guided entirely by the advice of Medni Ray, who was daily employed in the destruction of one or other of the Mahomedan chiefs. They were frequently put to death without cause, their houses plundered and their estates confiscated. At last the king evinced his dislike for all the nobles, and for Mahomedans in general, so that most of the officers who held situations under the late Nasir-ood-Deen and Gheias-ood-Deen were put to death and their offices filled by Rajpoots. The very Mahomedan females who had been educated in the seraglio of Sooltan Gheias-ood-Deen now became the mistresses of Medny Ray and the rest of the Rajpoot officers.'[1] Such an onslaught on the previous order inevitably incurred the wrath of Mahmud's Muslim neighbours and in 1531 the Muslim ruler of Gujarat attacked Mahmud, captured Mandu and ended the Khilji succession. Such a debacle may well have deranged cultural life. Yet painting itself continued if only in the 'armpit secrecy' of Jain households or among surviving Muslims devoted to poetry and art. And it is these two circumstances which prepare us for the sudden efflorescence of painting which occurs ten years later.

Between 1535 and 1561, Malwa was ruled by a new dynasty, the Pathans, and during this period its greatest and most powerful style emerges. The pictures in question comprise illustrations to the Sanskrit love-poem, the *Chaurapanchasika* or Fifty-four Stanzas,[2] a version of an Avadhi romance, the *Laur Chanda*[3] and a *Ragini* (Plate 3), the sole survivor of a series interpreting the love-poetry of music. In general manner, the pictures are clear extensions of the 'Jaunpur' style as it had developed in central India. The cliché of Jain painting—the grotesque projecting eye—has been discarded but the square-shaped heads, large eyes, jutting veils and red backgrounds all derive from this one style. At the same time, other elements are present and just as the 'Jaunpur' style explains aspects of the Book of Delicacies, the Mandu manuscripts of Nasir-ud-din are obviously responsible for notable ingredients. The women's jewellery, the arrow-like chevrons on eaves and pillars and the formalized trees, compounded of Shirazi herbage, are taken from the Book of Delicacies; while the band of floral scroll-work, marking the *Laur Chanda*,[4] is a Persian motif introduced into Mandu in the book of 1503. The style, then, is 'Jain' but enlarged and altered by contact with Persian painting. It is the total impression of these pictures, however, which is their most startling aspect. Their subject, romantic passion, represents a sharp break with both the Jain tradition of scripture-stories and the Persian manuscripts of Nasir-ud-din. In Persia, romantic themes had sometimes been illustrated in a mild and gentle manner but Jain painting had been exclusively religious and puritanical. The new style was nothing if not passionate. Ladies were shown with provoking veils, sharply jutting noses, great romantic eyes and proudly cut physiques—the essence of artistocratic charm—while red backgrounds were used to symbolize their passionate desires. A similar emotional excitement coloured execution. Distortions already present in the 'Jaunpur' style were magnified and there is a new air of lithe vigour and majestic assurance. So revolutionary an achievement can only have been attained at the instance of a patron himself devoted to romantic love and in Baz Bahadur, Pathan prince and subsequent ruler of Malwa, we have a person exactly fitted for this role.

Following Mahmud II, Baz Bahadur was only tepidly Muslim in outlook and like the Mughals, Akbar and Jahangir, did much to Indianize his character. His special glory was his infatuation for the lovely Hindu courtesan, Rupmati. Their love had probably commenced long before his succession in 1554, and so intense was their attachment that it was often celebrated in later poetry and painting. Besides cultivating Rupmati's charms, Baz Bahadur was also devoted to music and poetry. His knowledge of the latter included Persian, Avadhi and Hindi and when he himself wrote poems, he 'used to pour out his heart in Hindi poems descriptive of his love.'[5] We meet, in fact, a character in whom the twin cultures of Malwa are entangled and whose great romance, his passion for Rupmati, is itself a blending of Muslim and Hindu.

It is this fusion which appears in the new set of pictures. The *Laur Chanda* poem is in the Avadhi language, a variant of Persian, and is by Mulla Da'ud, a Muslim poet of the fourteenth century.[6] Its story, the ballad of Lorik and Chandaini, however, is essentially Hindu.[7] The Fifty-four Stanzas are by the Sanskrit poet, Bilhana, and are supposed to recall his rapturous encounters with his mistress, the lady Champavati. Both groups of illustration include poets —the former an aged figure squatting at the top of each picture, expounding lines in Muslim script;[8] the latter, the poet-hero himself, ardently prosecuting his love. In the latter case, he wears a transparent four-pointed skirt—perhaps in origin a Malwa fashion—and a turban tentatively connected with Malwa and Pathans. With caste-marks

[1] Ferishta, 258.

[2] N. C. Mehta collection, Bombay.

[3] Divided between the Lahore Museum, Pakistan and the Punjab Museum, Chandigarh.

[4] Basil Gray, *Rajput Painting* (London, 1948), pl. 3.

[5] *The Akbar Nama of Abul Fazl* (trans. H. Beveridge, Calcutta, 1907) II, 213.

[6] Rai Krishnadasa, 'An Illustrated Avadhi M.S. of *Laur-Chanda*', *Lalit Kala* (New Delhi, 1955–56), 66–71.

[7] For the English translation of a Hindu version, see Verrier Elwin, *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh* (O.U.P., Bombay, 1946), 338–370.

[8] Gray, *op. cit.*, pl. 3.

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so prominent on his brow, he is technically Hindu, but his whole appearance has a Muslim aura. The remaining picture, the *Ragini* (Plate 3), is a reflection of Baz Bahadur's ruling hobby, music. It is little wonder, then, that subjects of this kind should have suddenly appeared in Malwa painting and it is possible that the poet-lover of the Fifty-four Stanzas and the Muslim love-poet of the *Laur Chanda* are both disguised representations of Baz Bahadur himself.

Such an interpretation has two merits. It offers a psychological explanation for what in any view must be regarded as one of the greatest styles in Indian painting; but following the tragic ending of the great romance in 1561, it helps us to understand the possible movement of Mandu artists and the course of later Malwa painting. We know that in 1561 Mandu was captured by a Mughal army, Rupmati committed suicide and Baz Bahadur fled. In 1570 he submitted, but although appointed a general in Akbar's army, never regained free status. In such conditions, the artists responsible for the great Mandu style must almost certainly have left the city or perished in the massacre which followed its occupation. Some may possibly have made their way across the hills to Chawand, in Mewar, where they executed first a version of the Sanskrit love-poem, the *Gita Govinda*[1] in about the year 1580, and later a *ragini* series dated 1605.[2] Such pictures are not only clear derivatives from the great Mandu style, but foreshadow the outburst of Rajasthani painting in Mewar some decades later.[3] Several Mandu artists on the other hand may have quietly retired to their villages, there to practise a modified version of the grand manner.[4] Whatever these developments may have been, however, painting must certainly have continued for when we come to the seventeenth century, at least three separate types are evident, all connected in various ways with earlier manners.

The first is an obvious continuation of the great Mandu style. The earliest surviving examples (Plate 4) illustrate the love-poetry of music, and we can see in this choice of subject how permanent a revolution had been effected. The figures no longer possess square-shaped heads, sharp noses and jutting contours, but colour is used with romantic ardour, faces retain the same keen air of vehement resolve and trees in particular have the early schematic richness apparent in the Book of Delicacies and the Fifty-four Stanzas. The same robust and ardent manner appears in illustrations to the *Bhagavata Purana* dated 1688 (Plate 5) and yet another series proves that this virile and poetic style continued into the eighteenth century.[5]

The second strand (Plates 7 and 8) is connected with the minor state of Narsinghgarh. This state was formed in 1681 out of the larger state of Rajgarh, an area 150 miles south east of Mandu. In 1680, a series of Ragini pictures had already been painted there[6] and in 1652, some illustrations to the Sanskrit love-poem, the *Amaru Sataka*, had been executed in similar style at a place provisionally identified as Nasratgarh.[7] Between the two series there is so close a connection that the same group of artists must obviously be responsible. The 1652 pictures, however, are somewhat simpler in composition and include a floral panel filled with twining scrolls. This detail is foreign to other styles of Indian painting, but its presence in the Mandu manuscript of 1503 suggests a Malwa ancestry. It also occurs in *The Dying Crane* (Plate 6), a picture which is in the same style as a copy of Keshav Das's *Rasika Priya* executed in 1634.[8] In these pictures red backgrounds are maintained while a thick white band slackly rims the hills. And it is this last convention which appears in the Jain manuscript illustrated at Mandu in 1439.[9] Although, therefore, many links are missing, it is possible to discern a second type of Malwa painting—a type which, beginning with a central Indian version of Jain illustration, reacts, at any rate in part, to the Persian pictures painted at Mandu, and then, in the seventeenth century, gives new pictorial expression to the reigning vogue for love-poetry.

Such a vogue dates from at least the time of Baz Bahadur and possibly on account of strongly Muslim elements in Malwa culture owes little to the Hindu cult of Krishna.[10] In the Hindu strongholds of Rajasthan religion had vividly expressed romantic wishes. In Malwa on the other hand two kinds of love-poetry enchanted the ruling nobility. The first was the poetry of Amaru, the Sanskrit writer of the seventh century.

'Birds in all the trees of my garden, will you be able to imprison my longing in your musical net? It breaks out towards my lover whom I have not seen for thirty days. My longing would hasten and make haste and beat against her perfumed breasts, against her scented voice. Hold it not back, good birds.'

'She said over and over very tenderly: "Come and see my parakeet." I followed her into the house, but her women spied on us, and she said : "My parakeet must be

[1] Reproduced Karl Khandalavala, *Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay* (1956), No. 4 ; W. G. Archer, *The Loves of Krishna* (London, 1957), pls. 23 and 24.

[2] W. G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from Rajasthan* (Arts Council of Great Britain, 1957), pp. 25–27, pl. 1.

[3] *Ibid.*, pls. 2, 3 and 8. W. G. Archer, *Indian Painting*, 10–11, pl. 6.

[4] A *ragini* series published by W. Norman Brown ('Some Early Rajasthani Raga Paintings', *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, 1948, (XVI) is possibly the work of these artists.

[5] Plate 5 (note).

[6] Karl Khandalavala, 'Leaves from Rajasthan', *Marg*, IV, No. 3, Figs. 24 and 25.

[7] *Ibid.*, fig. 20.

[8] *Ibid.*, fig. 15. For an explanation of the *Rasika Priya*, see *The Loves of Krishna*, 90–92.

[9] Ajit Mookerjee, *op. cit.* Figs. 79 and 80.

[10] For the Krishna theme in Malwa painting see *The Loves of Krishna*, 101, 102, pl. 33.

[Continued on page 24

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Plate 1

THE SULTAN OUT HUNTING HALTS FOR REFRESHMENTS

Illustration to the *Nimatnama* or Book of Delicacies, Mandu, Central India, c. 1505

Size: $5\frac{1}{8}$ in. × $5\frac{1}{8}$ in.

Plate 2

THE SULTAN WITH LADIES

Illustration to the *Nimatnama* or Book of Delicacies, Mandu, Central India, c. 1505

Size: $4\frac{7}{8}$ in. × $5\frac{1}{8}$ in.

India Office Library (Commonwealth Relations Office), London (Ethé 2775)

With Plate 1, an example of the Turkman style[1] of Persian painting after its introduction to India at Mandu shortly after 1500. Plate 2 shows the Sultan about to drink from a cup as he superintends the making of broth. Plate 1, by a different hand, shows the same bland figure, eagerly arriving on horseback at one of the mock bazaars which were set up in the jungle on the occasion of hunts. In both plates, the central figure is probably an idealized rendering of Ghiyas-ud-din, Sultan of Malwa (1469 to 1501). Although a number of the remaining figures have donned male garb, all are women, as is shown by the lack of beards and moustaches and the presence of female jewellery and ornaments. The variety of complexions and physiques (Plate 2) illustrates Ghiyas-ud-din's connoisseur-like interest in feminine form.[2]

Ghiyas-ud-din's 'city of women' so impressed the Mughal emperor Jahangir that, writing much later, he gives his own description of the Sultan's arrangements. 'They say that he had collected fifteen thousand women in his harem. He had a whole city of them and made it up of all castes, kinds and descriptions—artificers, magistrates, quazis, kotwals and whatever else is necessary for the administration of a town. Wherever he heard of a virgin possessed of beauty, he would not desist until he possessed her. He taught the girls all kinds of arts and crafts and was much inclined to hunt. He had made a deer-park and collected all kinds of animals in it. He often used to hunt in it with his own women.'[3]

Both illustrations occur in the first and major portion of the book and may be either the work of Persian artists installed at Mandu or of Indian artists trained in the Turkman Shirazi technique.

[1] For a definition of the Turkman style of Persian painting as practised at Shiraz, see B. W. Robinson, *Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition of Persian Miniature Paintings* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1951) 8–11, 17, and 'Origin and Date of three famous Shah-Nameh Illustrations', *Ars Orientalis* (Washington, 1954), I, 105–112.

[2] For elucidating important aspects of this manuscript, I am deeply grateful to Mr. Robert Skelton of the Victoria and Albert Museum, who has also discussed many problems of Indian and Persian painting.

[3] *Memoirs of Jahangir* (trans. A. Rogers, London, 1909) I, 366.

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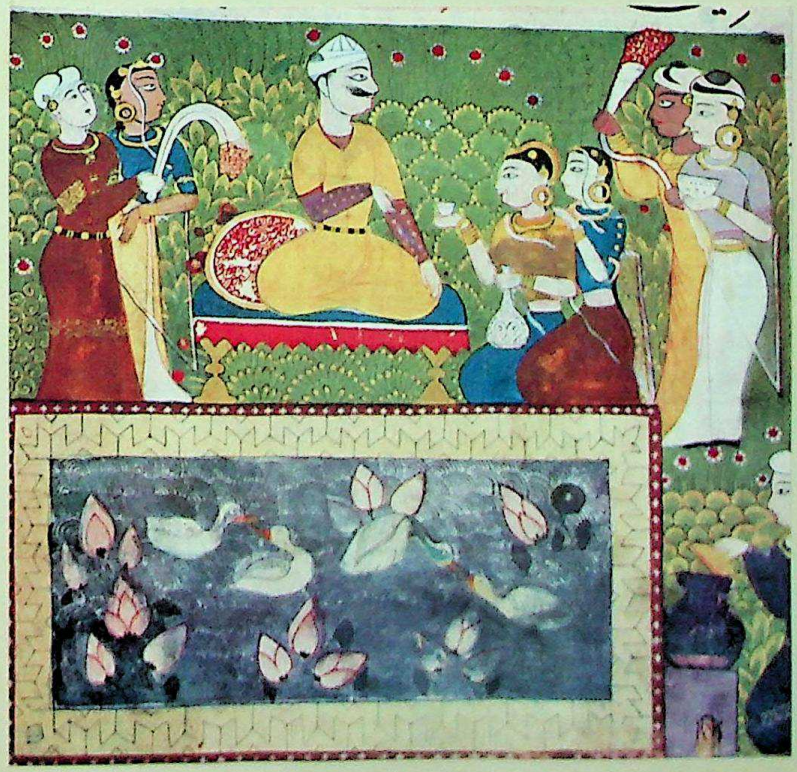

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Plate 3

LADY WORSHIPPING AT A SHRINE TO SIVA

Illustration to the Indian musical mode, *Bhairavi Ragini*.

Mandu, Central India, c. 1550

Size: $8\frac{1}{8}$ in. × $6\frac{1}{8}$ in.

Victoria and Albert Museum (J. C. French collection, I.S. 110—1955)

In this picture, a lady with lemon-yellow bodice, chequered skirt and exquisitely starched veil, kneels before a shrine to Siva—the phallic idol in dark green appearing before her ardent gaze. Her hands clasp the white cymbals used while chanting hymns. The term, 'Bhairavi', is feminine for 'Bhairava', a synonym of Siva and the picture with its accompanying poem is intended to symbolize the violent nature of his wishes.

Although at times attributed to Jaunpur in Eastern India (on account of its resemblance to the Jaunpur manuscript of 1465), the picture was early recognized by Mr. Basil Gray as 'stylistically transitional from the Gujarati to the Rajasthani school' and as possessing 'all the vigour of a new departure'. He regarded it as not earlier than 1550 in date or later than 1580 and ultimately attributed it to the 'Western Indian or Southern Rajasthani School'. He stressed, in particular, that the transition from the style of the present picture to that of Plate 4 (here attributed to Malwa, c. 1630) was easy and found it a clear precursor for the style of Rajasthani painting since accepted as that of Mewar c. 1650. Mr. Gray's conclusions were of the greatest importance and there can be no doubt that his pioneer study of the style established for the first time the true origins of Rajasthani painting.[1]

In support of an attribution to Mandu (immediately adjacent to Southern Rajasthan), attention is drawn to the following similarities with Plate 2—the presence of a lotus-pond with ducks, the employment of dark green colour and brusque rectangles, the inclusion of angular transparent veils and trimly curved physiques, while white pennants, spotted with red, echo the white and scarlet cushion immediately behind the king.[2]

[1] Basil Gray, 'Western Indian Painting in the Sixteenth Century: the Origins of the Rajput School', *Burlington Magazine* XC, 1948, 41–45; 'Painting', *The Art of India and Pakistan* (ed. L. Ashton, London, 1949), 90–92 and *Rajput Painting* (London, 1948).

[2] For reproductions of further paintings in this style, see Karl Khandalavala, 'Leaves from Rajasthan', *Marg*, IV, No. 3, Figs. 13 and 14; Basil Gray, 'Painting', *The Art of India and Pakistan*, pls. 81 and 82 and colour plate A; and W. G. Archer, *Indian Painting* (London, 1956), Fig. 3.

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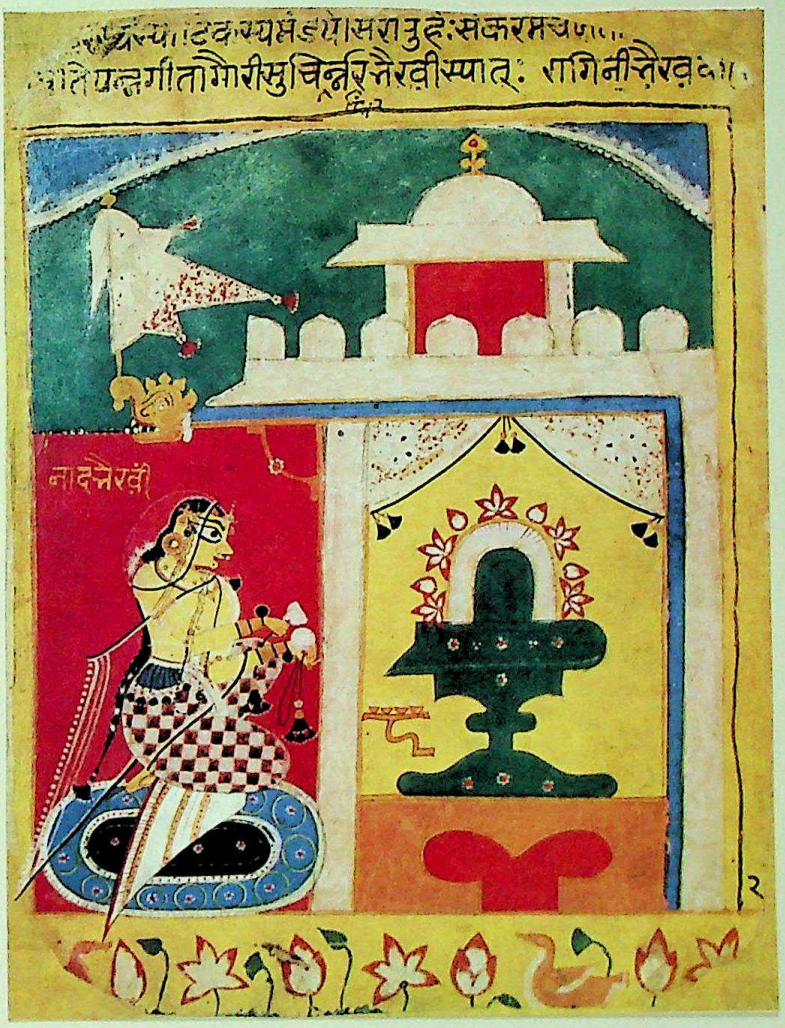

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Plate 4

LADY ADORNING HERSELF IN A MIRROR

Illustration to the musical mode, *Vilaval Ragini*

Malwa, Central India, c. 1630

Size: $7\frac{3}{4}$ in. × $5\frac{3}{4}$ in.

British Museum (1924–12–28–03)

The present picture shows the great style of Baz Bahadur (Plate 3) as it had developed in the course of eighty-five years.[1] The chic ferocity and glamorous distortions have vanished but the figures retain a taut and tense precision. Colour is used with bold invigorating clarity and there is the same reliance on tart simplification especially in the sky, tree and building. The feminine shape no longer conforms to earlier ideals but various details—the low flat domes and arrow-like band—betray the picture's Mandu ancestry. The most arresting likeness, however, is in the towering tree which rears its sharp and stylized shape against a background of impassioned storm. In a painting from the Fifty-four Stanzas[2], the poet-hero is shown kneeling at his mistress's feet, while a tree closely similar in form, occupies the same insistent position. It was in the brilliant simplification of foliage that the Shirazi style of Persian painting left perhaps its greatest mark on Malwa painting.

The subject of the picture is one of the ladies of *Hindola Raga*, 'the swinging music', tidying her hair with the help of a maid. The great moon-like mirror is perhaps an image for 'the mind's eye', the lady fancying that it is her lover, not herself, whom she sees. The fact that her skin is dark blue shows that in order to maintain his interest, she has resorted to a practice current among Hindu ascetics and has smeared her body with ashes. Asceticism was believed to confer super-normal powers and for this reason was sometimes adopted by ladies anxious to ensure their lovers' return. The choice of red for skirt and bodice, echoed in the red alcove and niches, symbolizes her passionate longing.[3]

[1] For reproductions of further pictures in this style, see O. C. Gangoly, *Masterpieces of Rajput Painting* (Calcutta, 1926), A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Catalogue of the Indian Collections in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston: Part V, Rajput Painting* (Cambridge, Mass., 1926) and *Rajput Painting* (Oxford, 1916), II, pls. 1–3.

[2] Basil Gray, 'Painting', *The Art of India and Pakistan*, pl. 81.

[3] For a Kangra painting with similar red skirt, see N. C. Mehta, *Studies in Indian Painting*, pl. 22.

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Plate 5

BALARAMA BATHING WITH THE MILKMAIDS

Illustration to the tenth book of the *Bhagavata Purana*

Malwa, Central India, dated 1688

Size: $11\frac{3}{4}$ in. × $7\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Gopi Krishna Kanoria collection, Calcutta

After killing the tyrant Kansa and thus completing the prime purpose for which he has entered the world, Krishna abandons the loves of his youth—the cow-girls of Brindaban—marries the princess Rukmini and embarks on a life of courtly adventure. The cow-girls, however, continue to adore him and in order to assuage their longing, Krishna dispatches his brother, Balarama, to re-enact with them the early rapturous scenes. The picture shows Balarama, pale-skinned and crowned, consorting with the milkmaids after night upon night of ecstatic dancing. Desiring to bathe in the river Jumna, he commands it to alter its course and when the river fails to comply, drags it to him with the aid of his ploughshare. At the top of the picture, the river-goddess, in green dress, bows before him while, lower, Balarama and the milkmaids plunge and frolic in the water.[1]

In style the picture descends directly from Plate 4, the squatter figures and more summary execution suggesting a possible gap of fifty years. Despite its later date, the painting possesses the rich and glowing colours of the earlier series while the standard Malwa convention of a single flat plane enables the essentials of a situation to be conveyed with masterly clarity.[2]

[1] For a fuller description of the incident see *The Loves of Krishna*, 61.

[2] Examples from a still later series (c. 1720), illustrating the *Bhagavata Purana* are in the Victoria and Albert Museum (I.S. 63–1957 to 72–1957).

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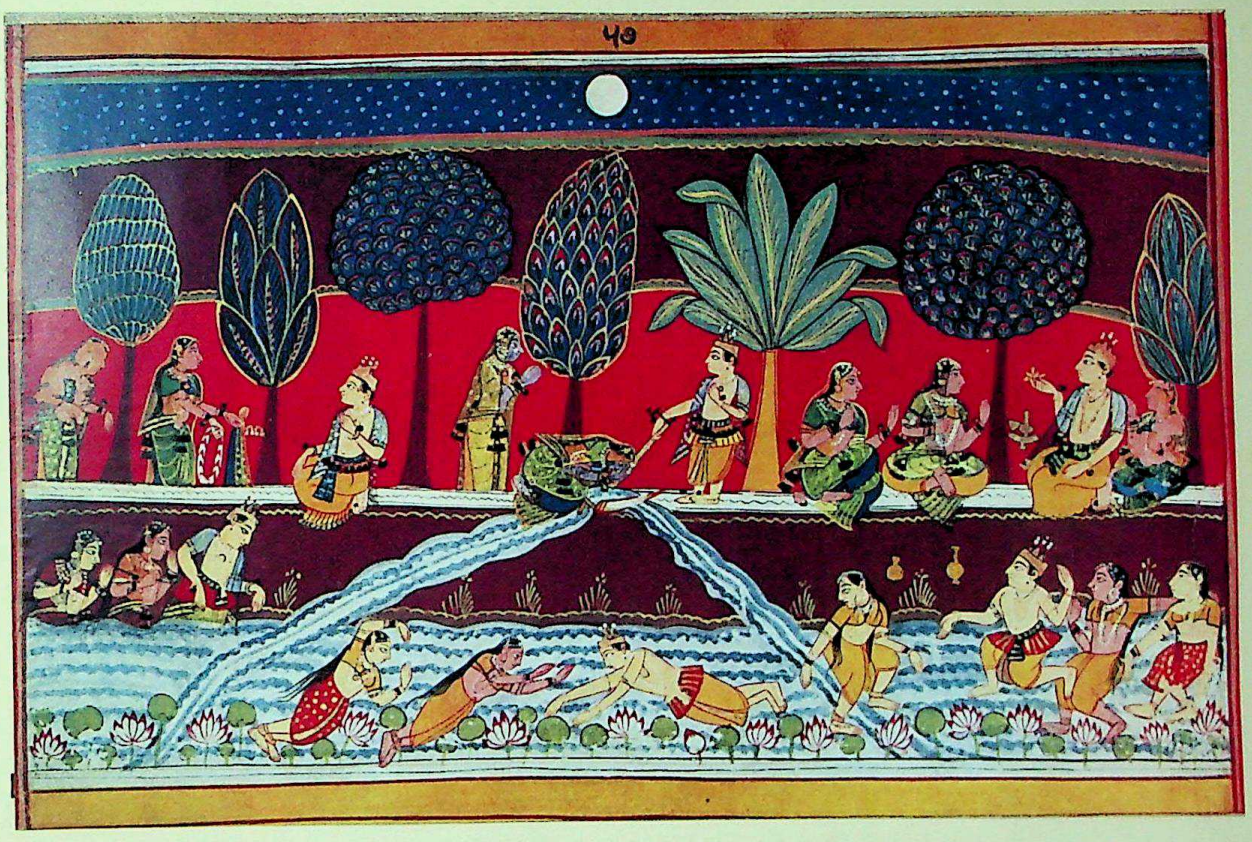

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Plate 6

RAMA AND LAKSHMAN DISCOVER THE DYING CRANE

Illustration to the Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*

Malwa, Central India, c. 1630

Size: $8\frac{1}{4}$ in. × $6\frac{1}{2}$ in.

Gopi Krishna Kanoria collection, Calcutta

Among the Hindu legends eagerly recited in India from the sixteenth century onwards was the *Ramayana* or Annals of Rama. Rama, distinguished by his blue skin, was an incarnation of Vishnu, a member of the Hindu Trinity. In the present incident, Rama followed by his half-brother, Lakshman, is cautiously entering a forest indicated by three upstanding trees. Their mission is the recovery of Sita, Rama's queen, whom Ravana, demon king of Lanka (or Ceylon) has abducted. The dying crane is Jatayu, who bravely impeded Ravana's progress by seizing the demon's chariot in its beak. Ravana mortally wounded Jatayu and the wilting bird, blood streaming from its neck, confronts Rama with ghastly evidence of Sita's fate.

In style, the picture resembles illustrations to a *Rasika Priya*, dated 1634, in the National Museum, New Delhi[1] and includes such early Malwa idioms as the wriggling skyline[2], a band of scroll-work recalling the Mandu manuscript of 1503 and the oval schematized trees, foreshadowed in the Book of Delicacies. With its starkly simple composition, reliance on dramatic juxtapositions of colour and blending of savage forms with gentle line, the picture illustrates the calm logic with which central Indian artists approached the problems of narrative painting.

[1] For reproductions, see Khandalavala, *op. cit.*, fig. 15, and H. Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia* (Bollinger Foundation, Pantheon Books, New York, 1955), I, pl. C 4. The colophon is in New Delhi. Some pages are in other collections.

[2] In a manuscript dated 1439, National Museum, New Delhi, (reproduced Ajit Mookerjee, *op. cit.*, fig. 80).

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Plate 7

GIRL PACING IN A GROVE

Illustration to the Indian musical mode, *Gauri Ragini*

Malwa, Central India, c. 1650

Size: 11 in. × 7½ in.

Gopi Krishna Kanoria Collection, Calcutta

The present picture takes a stage further the process illustrated by Plate 6. The band of scroll-work has become more floral. The trees are equally distorted but are more surging and luxuriant. Trunks are still a rich brown but the red frond-like creepers timidly protesting against a black and yellow screen have become a series of jaunty sprays madly cavorting in a dance of spring. Two herons cumbrously speeding across the sky reinforce the general mood of agitation—a mood suggested by the eager peacocks anxiously eyeing the strutting girl.

As in Plate 3, the central figure personifies music, here interpreted as a girl holding two wands made by impaling flowers on a twig. Her elaborate tassels and long swinging garlands invest her with the same exuberant and florid richness suggested by the tossing trees, while her vigorous walk conveys an impression of passionate energy. In Indian poetry, peacocks were conventional images for lovers—their need for rain expressing the anguish of desire, while herons, as birds connected with water, had similar significance.[1]

[1] For further notes on the symbolic meaning of herons and peacocks, see W. G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from Rajasthan* (The Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1957).

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Plate 8

LOVERS AT NIGHT

Illustration to the Indian musical mode, *Varari Ragini*

Malwa, Central India, c. 1680

Size: 8 in. × $5\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Gopi Krishna Kanoria Collection, Calcutta

An example of the second strand in Malwa painting popularized in the seventeenth century at Narsinghgarh.[1] The subject is once again an illustration to the kind of poem which accompanied and interpreted the thirty-six standard modes of music. A passion for *Ragini* pictures, as they were called, was current from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries and suggests that central India specialized in music and its poetical interpretation. The famous singer of Akbar's court, Tan Sen, came from Gwalior in central India and it is possible that in indulging his passion for music, Baz Bahadur himself was not merely expressing the private likings of a Muslim prince but giving public expression to a whole vein in Malwa culture.

The present mode is feminine in character, Varari being one of the 'ladies' of the 'musical prince', Dipaka Raga, 'the candle music'. For this reason it focuses on the girl's eager adoration, stressing the fact that even when embraced by her lover, she continues to minister to his comfort and fans him with a white hair-plume. Hair-plumes or fly-whisks were usually made from yaks' tails, imported into India from Tibet. They appear in early Indian sculpture and played much the same role in Indian life and art as fans in Japan. In the present picture, the hair-plume gripped by the girl may have the further function of fanning 'the flame of love'.

[1] Karl Khandalavala, *op. cit.*, figs. 24 and 25.

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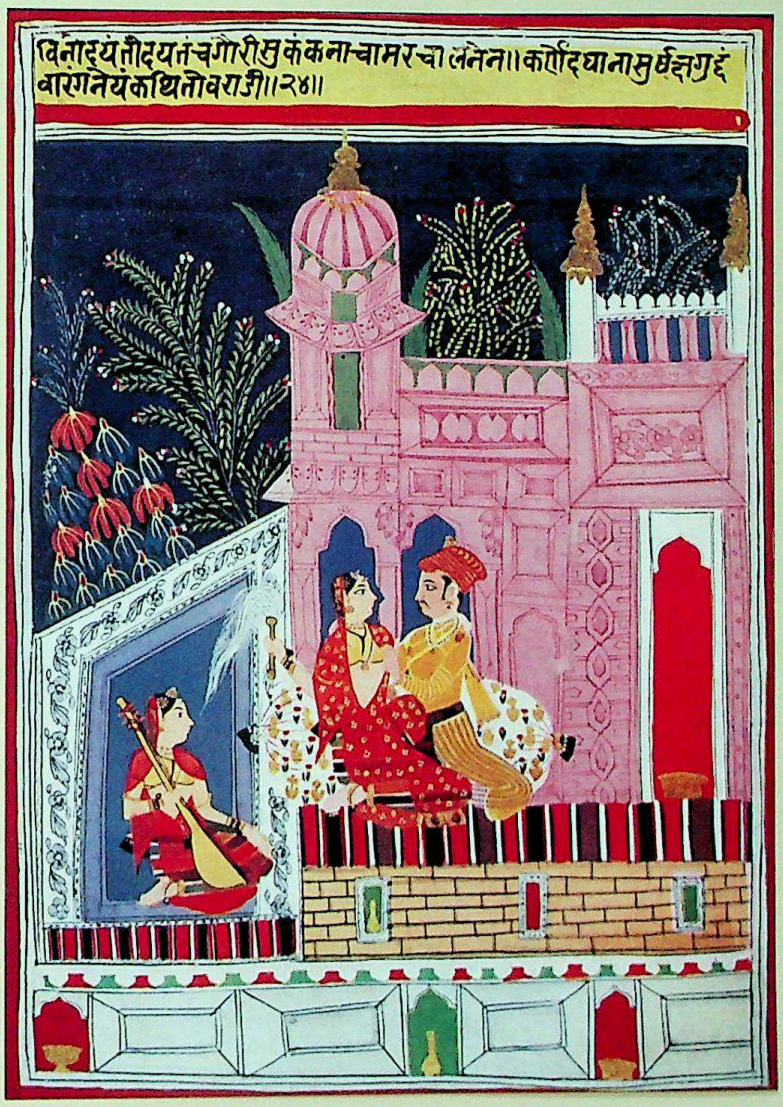

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Plate 9

THE LADY AND THE LOTUS

Illustration to the Indian musical mode, *Malasri Ragini*

Malwa, Central India, c. 1640

Size: $10\frac{3}{8}$ in. × 8 in.

Collection of the late F. J. P. Lory, London

With plate 10, an example of the third strand in central Indian painting after possible influence from Ahmadnagar in the Deccan. Ahmadnagar had possessed a short-lived school of painting in the second half of the sixteenth century, when the style of one of its greatest productions[1]—a prince and his lady reclining on a swing—was probably influenced by contact with Malwa painting of the Baz Bahadur period. It is noteworthy that the trees in this picture have the same foliage which occurs in the Narsinghgarh strand of later Malwa painting,[2] and it seems likely that if the fall of Mandu in 1561 led to the migration of a few Malwa artists, the fall of Ahmadnagar in 1600 may have resulted in the same process but in reverse. Such a movement might then explain the appearance in the present picture of such Ahmadnagar idioms as gold sprigs flecking the red and olive backgrounds, the tilted bed, the austere throne, swirling scarf and foliage rimmed with gold.[3]

The picture illustrates one of the 'ladies' of yet another 'musical prince', Malkaus Raga—the inclusion of the empty bed, the two peacocks and tame deer suggesting ardent longing. As she awaits her lover's arrival, she plucks the petals of a lotus, perhaps indulging in an Indian wishing game—'he loves me, he loves me not'—soothing herself by fingering the cool petals or even stroking in imagination the lover's skin.

[1] Reproduced *The Art of India and Pakistan*, Plate 142 (804).

[2] Khandalawala, *op. cit.*, fig. 25.

[3] For Ahmadnagar painting see Basil Gray, *The Art of India and Pakistan*, pls. 142 and 143, and *Treasures of Indian Miniatures* (London, 1955); Stella Kramrisch, *A Survey of Painting in the Deccan* (London, 1937).

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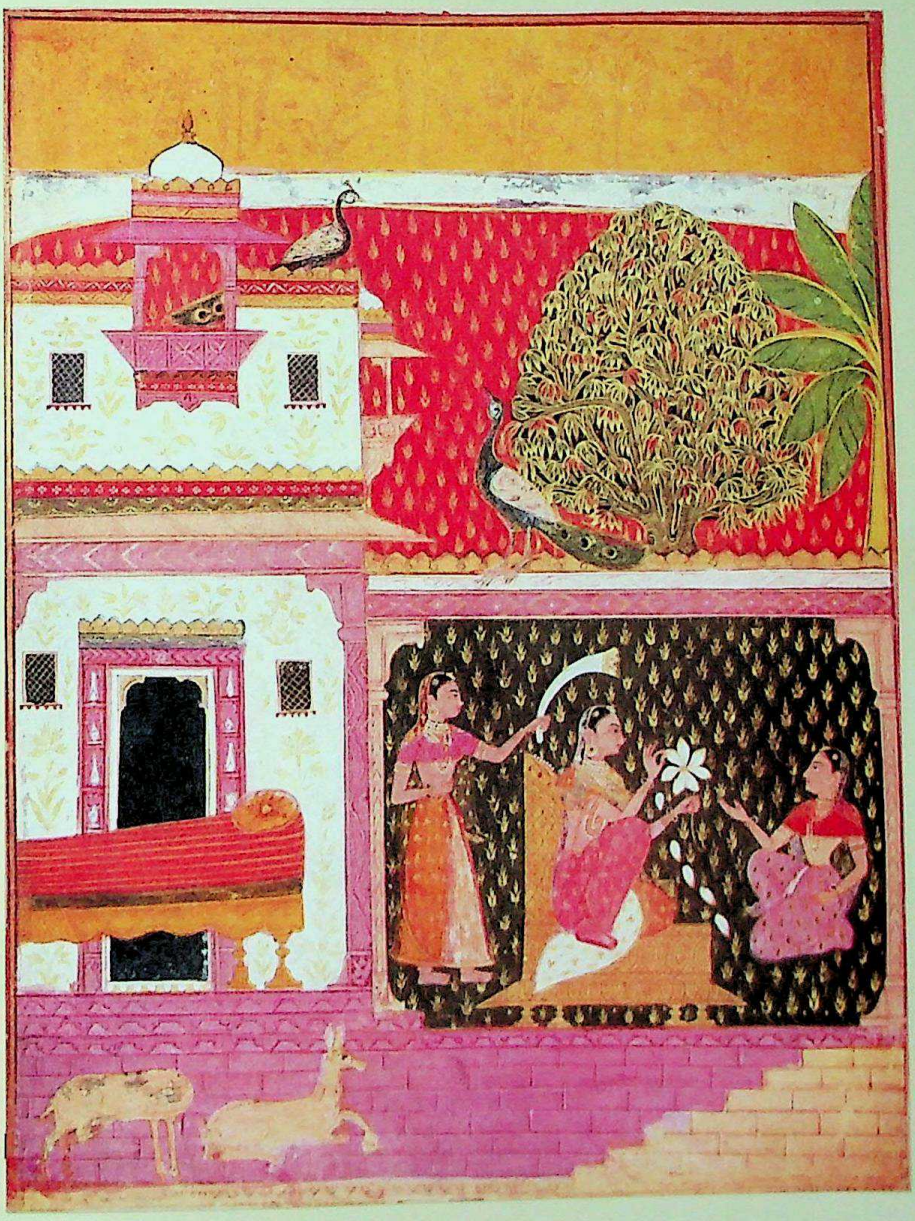

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Plate 10

LOVERS APPROACHING A BED-CHAMBER

Illustration to the Indian musical mode, *Malavi Ragini*

Malwa, Central India, c. 1680

Size: $11\frac{1}{8}$ in. × $7\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Victoria and Albert Museum (I.S. 66–1952)

With Plate 9, a continuation of the Ahmadnagar strand in Malwa painting. The inordinately slim and elongated women, their eyes thinly scratched as if by a thorn, resemble Ahmadnagar pictures of the early period, while the pink and mauve steps, the tilted bed, tree, pavilion and general composition closely link the picture to Plate 9 itself. Other examples from this series possess the same colours as the second strand of Malwa painting and suggest that during the seventeenth century intimate blendings of separate styles occurred. In this connection, the elephant-headed ornament, its trunk lifting on high a pair of flags, duplicates the monster clasping the pennants in Plate 3. It was out of pictures such as these that typical Malwa paintings of the eighteenth century developed.[1]

In subject, the picture represents another and different 'lady' of the 'musical prince', *Bhairava Raga*. She is now a girl strolling with her lover, urging him to delay no longer but to lead her within.

[1] For reproductions of eighteenth century Malwa paintings, see I. Stchoukine, *La Peinture Indienne* (Paris, 1929), pls. 75 and 76; *The Art of India and Pakistan*, pl. 92 (448); A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Boston Catalogue: V, Rajput Painting*, pls. 21 and 22, and Zimmer, *op. cit.*, I, pl. C 8.

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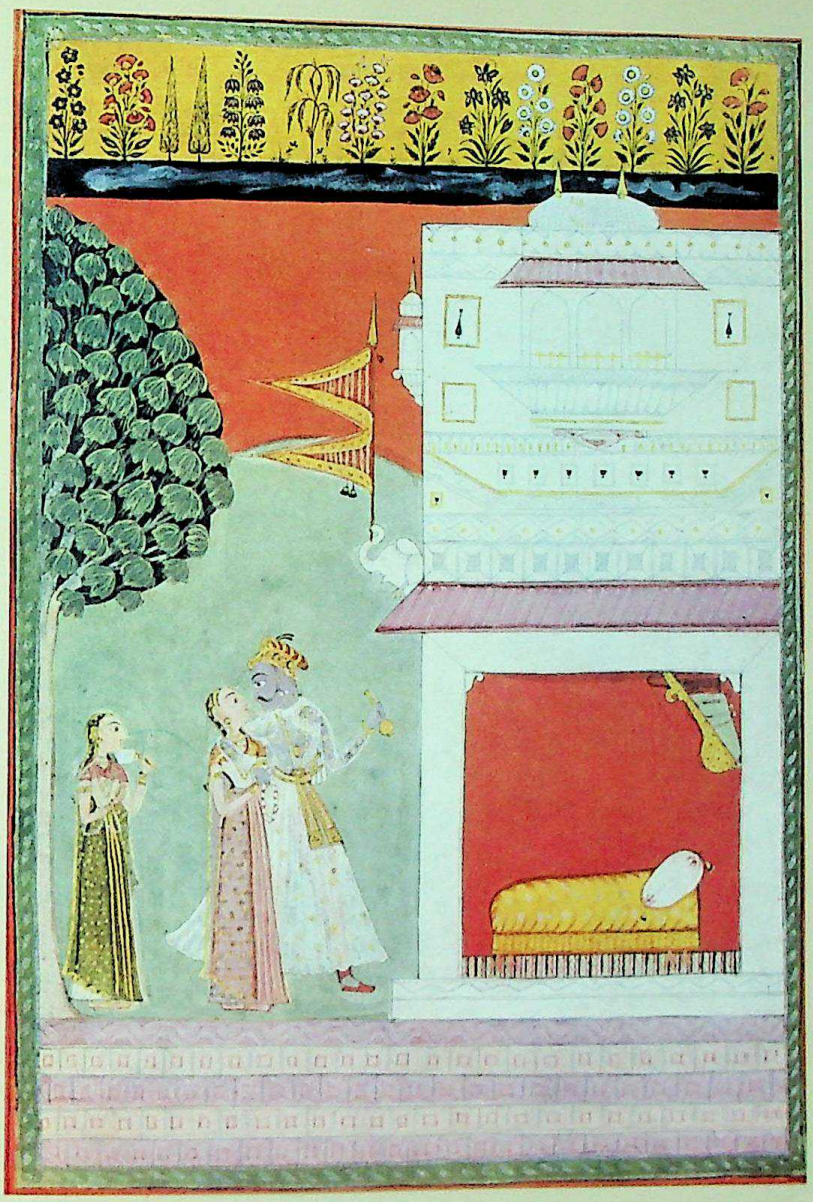

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Continued from page 5]
in the garden.'' He was not in the arbour, for the scent of the jasmine was too strong there. He was not on the bank of the runlet, for a little boy was cutting wood there. We found him at last in a deserted pavilion on a gilded sofa.'[1] The second kind was the love-poetry of music in which the 'spirit' of a mode was addressed as if it were a charming lady or delightful prince. For pictures illustrating such poems, the demand was even stronger, quantities of *Ragamalas* (or 'Garlands of Modes') being painted in styles resembling those of Narsinghgarh. In these pictures, there is no longer the early stress on bold magnetic forms. It is rather as if the prime participators are trees and creepers,[2] their surging luxuriance and swaying branches conveying, as in pictures by the English painter, Samuel Palmer, a mood of passionate excess.

The remaining strand in Malwa painting reflects the influence of Ahmadnagar in the Deccan.[3] The pictures with which we are concerned are clearly of Malwa provenance for they share the same range of reds, steely blues and soft greens which characterize the second strand of Malwa painting. At the same time other idioms have an Ahmadnagar character and provide clear proof of some mysterious cross-fertilization. Ahmadnagar had fallen in 1600 and there is no trace of its painting after that date. It is possible, then, that after the city's capture, a few Deccani artists hurried northwards. The pictures in question date from about 1680 (Plate 10), but another picture (Plate 9) may well be forty years earlier and it is not unreasonable to suppose that Ahmadnagar elements steadily persisted between 1600 and 1680. Such pictures are of special importance for it was out of this third strand that Malwa painting in the eighteenth century was chiefly to develop. Many series of pictures were produced illustrating the love-poetry of music and while figures, particularly those of women, tended to shorten, eyes lost something of their sharpness and colour its ardent intensity, the basic compositions and many idioms remained the same. Early in the nineteenth century, descendants of the original artists may have carried the style to Jaipur, the state in Rajasthan immediately north of Malwa, and for a while developed a mixed Malwa-Jaipur manner. In Malwa itself, however, courtly painting seems to have ended.

Such a conclusion was due to one circumstance—the coming of the Marathas. Swarming in from western India and the Deccan, they were comparable to the Goths and Vikings of western Europe. They aimed at spoil, not rule, and since the hapless Malwa lay in their course, it was central India and its cities which again and again received their vicious attentions. The Marathas, wrote Tod, were 'associations of vampires who drained the very life-blood wherever the scent of spoil attracted them.'[4] They were virulently inartistic, the historian, Vincent Smith, even stating that they 'ordinarily refused to learn the art of reading, writing and cyphering which they considered unworthy of a soldier'. In the interests of loot, the Marathas were gradually forced to take charge of various territories, annexing many Rajput estates and founding in Malwa such famous enclaves as Gwalior and Indore. But for art and culture, their contempt was supreme.

It is rather in the eastern half of central India, in Bundelkhand, that we must look for further painting in the eighteenth century. As early as 1590, Indrajit Singh had patronized poets and it is possible that in about 1620 a copy of Keshav Das's *Rasika Priya* was illustrated in Orchha. The style discloses a broken-down Akbari manner and whatever other conclusions are drawn, it seems unlikely that Orchha itself had any distinctive tradition. Only in fact in the second half of the eighteenth century, and then in the neighbouring state of Datia, does painting make its appearance. The crumbling of the Mughal empire seems to have given a fresh impetus to Rajput culture and just as Jodhpur, Bikaner, Kishangarh and Jaipur all witnessed revivals of painting, Datia under Raja Shatrujit (1762–1801) also evolved a new style of central Indian painting.[5] The main subject was Shatrujit himself, but pictures were also produced celebrating the loves of Radha and Krishna and the moods and spirits of the twelve months. The Datia style owes nothing to the parallel styles of Malwa and it is rather to Jaipur artists, aided perhaps by Mughal discipline, that we must look for this minor renaissance. Shatrujit was followed by Raja Parichhat (1801–39) but by then the British had absorbed central India, British values had affected Indian taste and painting in Datia was over.

Such an ending is not perhaps surprising when we recall the state of art under modern occupations. Indeed it is only in the India which has grown up since 1947 that enthusiasm for painting has once again emerged. Traditional Indian art is now in process of re-evaluation and as part of this process we can perceive the importance of central Indian painting. Despite its varying dynasties, Malwa evoked some of the most vital developments in Indian art. Its early introduction of Persian styles supplied the standard Jain manner with invigorating idioms, its influence in this respect far pre-dating that of the Mughals. Its parallel strands of painting imbued 'musical love-poetry' with glowing ardour. Above all, its supreme glory, the style associated with Baz Bahadur, represented the most adult expression in Indian painting of sophisticated romance. It was painting of this kind which laid the foundations of Rajput painting in Mewar, the premier state of Rajasthan, and produced the virile compositions which exhilarate Indian minds today.

1 Trans. E. Powys Mathers.
2 Compare *The Art of India and Pakistan*, pl. 85 (419).
3 For paintings attributed to Ahmadnagar, see note to Plate 9.
4 James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (London, 1829).
5 N. C. Mehta, *Studies in Indian Painting* (Bombay, 1926) 39–45.

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